To Hell with Christ!—the Gospel, According to Lazarillo:
Parodia Sacra & Picaresque Signifying on the Novel as Genre

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ABSTRACT

Andrew R. Belton: To Hell with Christ!—the Gospel, According to Lazarillo:
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(Under the direction of Jessica Lynn Wolfe)

This thesis looks at an anonymously-authored work of early modern Spanish prose fiction, namely *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes, y de sus fortunas y adversidades* (The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes: his Fortunes and Misfortunes). It makes the argument that *Lazarillo*, as a progenitor-text for the picaresque and novelistic traditions, initiates the use of intertextual signifying and the play of the parodic as an imaginative practice that will come to define twentieth century notions of the novel as a generic form with identifiable techniques. Major portions of this essay read parody as it functions within the text, both thematically and structurally; applying Bakhtinian notions of *parodia sacra* to discuss methodology, form and the construction of meaning within the work.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION[1]

> For this investigation our first need is a working definition of the characteristics of the novel – a definition sufficiently narrow to exclude previous types of narrative and yet broad enough to apply to whatever is usually put in the novel category.
>
> Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*

> Signifyin(g), then, is a metaphor for textual revision.
>
> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey*

> The Word had lowered Himself to be mortal: Judas, the disciple of the Word, could lower himself to the role of informer (the worst transgression dishonor abides), and welcome the fire which can not be extinguished. The lower order is a mirror of the superior order, the forms of the earth correspond to the forms of the heavens; the stains on the skin are a map of the incorruptible constellations; Judas in some way reflects Jesus.
>
> Jorge Luis Borges, "Three Versions of Judas"

It is no secret that the novel, as a generic designation, functions somewhere in the realm of the ineffable. It is, at one turn, alike to many literary genres, containing within its structure and formal techniques aspects of the classical epic, of early romances, exemplifying many of the performative aspects of drama, and the lyricism of poetry (in a way that has led literary critic,

[1]In the development of my arguments in this essay, I am indebted to Mikhail Bakhtin for his ideas and writings about "sacred parody" as a function of laughter (burlesque, carnival, and otherwise), but would also like to acknowledge the writings of Ronald Paulson on the subject in his work on the sixteenth-century artist and writer, William Hogarth, as presented in *Hogarth's Harlot: Sacred Parody in Enlightenment England* (2003). Paulson provided an understanding and conception of sacred parody that allowed me to weigh, not so much in contradiction (perhaps more accurately in contradistinction), Bakhtin's somewhat more well-accepted notions of the term. I am also indebted to the work of Henry Louis Gates, Jr., whose writing on Signification as "the trope of tropes, the figure of figures" in *The Signifying Monkey* (1988) also informs my reading of parody (specifically in the picaresque tradition) and textual revision in the *Lazarillo* text. All this as I worked towards an understanding of the novel-as-genre, separate from the novel as form, and as it gets signified (through a play of difference) by the picaresque tradition. See specifically Paulson, pgs. 5-75, 133-149, and 227-318. Also, see Gates, pgs. 44-124.

Michael Holquist, to call it a "supergenre").[2] Yet, at the same time, it is a wholly indefinable form, with varied classifications and criteria—a "baggy monster," to misappropriate Henry James's phrase.[3] In her introduction to The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000, Dorothy Hale makes the point that "what counts as the novel – is a product of the interpretative paradigm brought to bear on it" (Hale 2). In his An Exemplary History of the Novel, Walter Reed, describes the novel as an "outsider." Reed writes:

> It is this sense of itself as "outsider," in fact, that I would single out as the most basic feature of the novel as a literary kind. The novel is a deliberate stranger to literary decorum; it insists on placing itself beyond the pale of literary tradition. Its ethos of opposition is fundamental and should not be ignored. It is one reason that the term 'novel' (from the Latin *novellus*, 'news') has proven so difficult to define.
> (Reed 3)

Reed's insistence on the oppositionality inherent to the novelistic form, and Hale's point about what gets designated as "novel" being linked to a polemical function made relevant by an individual scholar's interpretation, features prominently in my designation of the parameters for discussing *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes, y de sus fortunas y adversidades* (The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes: his Fortunes and Misfortunes).[4] Although *Lazarillo* is somewhat

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[2] In his introduction to Mikhail Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), Holquist writes: "[the novel] is thus best conceived either as a supergenre, whose power consists in its ability to engulf and ingest all other genres (the different and separate languages peculiar to each), together with other stylized but non-literary forms of language; or not a genre in any strict, traditional sense at all" (xxix). I prefer to read the novel in Holquist's first sense of the supergenre (in terms of its structure and form), but am seeking to define the novel as genre quite differently from the strict structuring and language conventions that Holquist is suggesting here.

[3] For the reference to the novel as a "baggy monster," see Henry James's "The Art of Fiction" (1988), in *The Future of the Novel: Essays on the Art of Fiction*, ed. Leon Edel (New York: Vintage, 1956), p.11.

[4] For the sake of brevity, going forward, I will refer to the text as *Lazarillo.* All references to and quotes from the Spanish text are based on the Francisco Rico edition (1997) and do not take into account the Alcalá additions included in his appendices. The English translations are taken, in combination, from the Alpert (2003), Appelbaum (2001), and from my own original translations, usually going between the translations as I feel one most nearly approaches the original Spanish, and as the translation is suited to my reading of parody—where a particular phrase might capture the doubling of meaning or biblical allusions I want to emphasize or elucidate. In addition, the English translation is always quoted first,

problematically termed a novel, the historical significance of the text in establishing the picaresque tradition, and later, the fact that the said tradition comes to instruct and construct, what I would like here to delimit as, the novel as genre, are points to be further laid out and discussed in this essay. For now, it is sufficient to say that both Hale and Reed influence my reading of the novel as a problematic designation with enormous literary significance. As we analyze one of it early progenitors, the *Lazarillo* text, I hope to present a more widely applicable definition of the novel, both as a form of fictive literature (that is, a way of composing prose narratives) and also as an explicable literary genre, with its own unique organizing criteria and self-consciously self-referential conventions. Parodying features prominently in this discussion, though I will not limit this strictly to a conversation about the parodying of the contents of the sacred, but will attempt to extend the argument into the realm of an intertextuality that generates the more significant revisionary practices and signifying (as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has used the term) that make *Lazarillo*, as an early model of the picaresque, an initiating text in the enduring narrative of the development of the novel as genre.

INTRODUCTION TO LAZARILLO: PARODIC HEROISM IN SUCH VULGAR TIMES

La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes begins with the admission on the part of its narrator that the events the reader is about to uncover are "matters quite exceptional"—cosas tan señaladas (Rico, 52).[5] Exceptional, that is, because the events involve levels of vulgarity and bawdiness as never quite candidly demonstrated in any other prose narrative to date. The reader is made privy

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followed by the Spanish, and the same occurs in the parenthetical citation, with the page number in the English edition, followed by pages in the Rico.

[5] More accurately, "things so indicated;" though Appelbaum's note translates the phrase, "so often criticized." The word *señaladas* comes from the Spanish verb *señalar*, which (among other things) can mean to mark out, signal, or designate. It can, however, also indicate the marking/wounding of the face, which is significant to Lazarillo's tale and becomes a major trope for picaresque revision. See, for instance, Francisco de Quevedo's *El Buscón* (The Swindler) in Michael Albert's edition of *Lazarillo* (2003), pgs. 61-197.

to examples of the "bleeding of sacks," the robbery of a blind man and a priest's bread-chest, promiscuous clerics, an indulgence scam, the cuckolding of a married man by an Archpriest, and much more in the vein of the transgressive and debauchered. That the *Lazarillo* tells the story of a small boy, of dubious and disgraceful parentage, born into poverty and forced into a life of depraved service is of no small consequence in the history of the prose narrative either. Scholar Helen H. Reed describes the *pícaro*, of which Lazarillo is the earliest definitive example, as the wholly original figure to come out of sixteenth-century Spanish literature. She writes:

> The *pícaro* is born in dishonor and poverty to parents that he abandons at an early age. He is obliged to fend for himself in a world of tricksters, whom he observes and to some degree imitates in order to survive. The *pícaro* of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries is a novel fictional character not unrelated to a novel social type that emerged in the burgeoning cities of Spain…
> (*The Reader in the Picaresque Novel* 20)

The novelty of the *pícaro*, as a literary figure, is an important advance in literature; particularly in relation to his high-born literary ancestor, contemporary, and (in many ways) antithesis, the hero of the classic medieval chivalric romance. Where the *pícaro* lives in the vulgar, the earthy, and the "real" (however complicated that term may seem in the literary context), the romantic hero dwells in the land of the noble, the idealistic, and the moral good (i.e. the somewhat fantastic). In this way, Lazarillo, as the first in a long line of picaresque heroes, offers a unique parodic reading and reinvigoration of the romantic protagonist—a revisionary signification that disrupts and dismantles notions of an easy morality as previously established by the representations of heroism constructed in the thematized narratives of descent and ascent, consistently identified with romantic figurations of the noble hero.[6] If the *Lazarillo* text can be

[6] Scholar Francisco Rico offers a very different reading of *Lazarillo*'s relationship to the literary tradition, by way of the epistolary autobiography. Although he too sees parody as the major operation in this relationship, there is a sense that his reading of parody is not of a revisionary order. See "Lazarillo de Tormes, or polysemy" in Francisco Rico's *The Spanish Picaresque Novel and the Point of View* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 1-29.

said to provide a certain model for later novelistic forms, that is, as those forms are identified by scholars such as Ian Watt and Michael McKeon, forms that solidify into a more definitive genre in early-to-mid-eighteenth century England, the argument to be made is for the *Lazarillo* as a model that centralizes this shift in the stylization of characterizations.[7] As Ian Watt writes, "the 'realism' of the novels of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding is closely associated with the fact that Moll Flanders is a thief, Pamela a hypocrite, and Tom Jones a fornicator" (464). Such a drastic shift in the inherent nature of the novelistic hero would not have been possible without the example first orchestrated within the picaresque tradition, particularly as found in the *Lazarillo* text.

In his many writings on the romance genre, Northrop Frye, too, concedes that with the rise of the novel as a literary form came an aesthetic shift away from the idealistic characterizations of the romantic hero. "The essential difference between the novel and romance lies in the conception of characterization," writes Frye, and continues: "The romancer does not attempt to create 'real people' so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes." (*Anatomy of Criticism* 99) The picaresque, on the other hand, deals in the revisionary and the parodic—signifying predominately on the idea of the romantic hero through the conception of the *pícaro*, creating for its readers a hero that, on the surface, is anti-heroic. I want to distinguish for a moment here between the surface heroism of the romantic hero and a more complex notion of the term, even as it begins to be articulated in the *Lazarillo* text. Lázaro, in the Prólogo to his narrative, tells us:

[7] Se Ian Watt's "The Rise of the Novel" in *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000*. Ed. Dorothy Hale. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 462-480); and Michael McKeon's *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*. (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 1-24.

> …in addition, so that those who have inherited noble rank may judge how little that is due to their own merits, since Fortune favored them, and how much more was accomplished by those who, finding Fortune hostile to them, reached a safe haven by rowing with strength and skill.
> (Appelbaum 5)

> …y también porque consideren los que heredaron nobles estados cuán poco se les debe, pues Fortuna fue con ellos parcial, y cuánto más hicieron los que, siéndoles contraria, con fuerza y maña remando salieron a buen puerto.
> (Rico 53)

The picaresque hero, unlike his romantic contemporary, is a "self-consciously" self-made character, and much of the development of the picaresque narrative involves the hero's discovery of his faults and strengths as they constitute the qualities of his interior life. In Lazarillo's case, the quality of that life is of a very low grade. Although Lazarillo feels he has met the misfortunes of his life with an extreme resolve to achieve honor for himself. This type of parodic commentary, a commentary that focuses on the parodic signification of the romantic hero, is one innovation of the picaresque tradition that leads to a system of characterization coming to be identified with the modern novel. It is a revision that is not simply an inversion, but something more of a parodic "play-with-difference."[8] As we move into our discussion of the elements of sacred parody in the *Lazarillo* text, it should become increasingly apparent what such a parodic play might look like.

PARODIA SACRA: STRUCTURE & THE PLAY ON THE HOLY SACRAMENTS

In the introduction to his extensive study of the writings of the sixteenth-century French author, Rabelais, Russian Formalist Mikhail Bakhtin discusses the evolution of *parodia sacra*, or

[8] Again, here, I am applying Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s use of the term "Signifyin(g)" to my reading of the specific types of parodying at work in the *Lazarillo* text. Though Gates discusses signifying as a black vernacular technique that develops through oral practice into a literary technique, I want to read signifying simply through its literary lens as a *play* (in the *Lazarillo* text at least) on certain preexisting literary forms (namely, those found in the romance genre) with a difference, or as *play-with-difference*. I am cognizant here of how Jacques Derrida's sense of *différance* might play into my reading of parody in the *Lazarillo* text, as Derrida defines the process of meaning-making and deferral through ideas of the "trace" and a steady sedimentation. Here, I want to read this meaning-deferral as a by-product of the developing field of intertextuality that is at work in the (literary) allusions of the *Lazarillo* text. See Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 60-93.

"sacred parody," as a practice typified in the carnival celebrations of the Middle Ages (*Rabelais and His World* 1-58). Bakhtin outlines the development of this parodic "troping" of sacred content as it becomes more self-referentially expressive of a literary genre. He locates the spirit of *carnival* in the regenerative power of laughter, and recalls that "parodies of Gospel readings, of the most sacred prayers (the Lord's Prayer, the Ave Maria), of litanies, hymns, psalms, and even Gospel sayings," were not just common practice during the carnival season, but often were the most cherished parts of many religious celebrations (14). Accordingly such parodic play had brought about, Bakhtin adds, "echoes of carnival laughter within the walls of monasteries, universities, and schools" (14). It is clear that the *Lazarillo* text figures into this tradition of sacred parody. Its satiric treatment of such consecrated topics as the Incarnation, the Eucharist, the Mass Liturgy, Baptism, prayer, and other religious acts and practices, are all a part of that "parodying, travestying, reinterpreting and re-accentuating" that Bakhtin describes as taking place in the *parodia sacra* of the carnival tradition (74). As such, Bakhtin's description of sacred parody offers a point of contact, and simultaneously a point of departure for the critique I would like to offer of the parodic techniques informing the structure and content of the *Lazarillo* text.[9]

It is clear, from much of the present scholarship addressing the *Lazarillo* text, that there have been significant questions concerning the organization, unity, and structure of the

[9]There is a way in which the "blasphemous tone" of the *Lazarillo* will inform my critical reading and analysis of sacred parody. When matters of faith and religious belief are taken out of their sacred context, one runs a serious risk of making light of or offending the sensibilities of people's strongly held beliefs. This, of course, at no point has been my intention. Nor do I belief that such a simplistic dismissal of the sacred is part of the spirit of text as conceived by its anonymous author. At times, humor pervades. At other times, the text is engaged in a very serious critique of religious ideology and the Catholic Church, of the economic and institutionalized poverty and destitution and the state-sponsored terror and intolerance of sixteenth century Inquisition Spain. Thus, many of the assertions of my paper should be read with a half-wink. Though I address issues of faith and spiritual belief, the discussion should always be read in light of the fictive, picaresque, and at times grotesque world of the *Lazarillo* text itself.

narrative.[10] Of particular concern are the seemingly rushed middle chapters (IV, V, and VI), where Lazarillo becomes a spectator in his own autobiography. Scholar Stanley J. Nowak, Jr. has made the case that

> Artistic unity in *Lazarillo* is a source of ongoing disagreement among literary critics who generally hold one of four positions determined by whether they feel the work is complete or not and whether they judge it to have or to lack artistic unity. Even among those who agree that there is unity, there is disagreement concerning its source or nature.
> (*Hispania* 324)

Disagreement concerning the text's structural unity has often led scholars to hypothesize about the intended design of the text by its anonymous author. Often, this hypothesizing has lead to the selection of a central theme, idea, or image from the narrative to theorize about an overall structure for the text. Nowak, for example, claims that Tratado Primero provides a structure-in-miniature that can be extrapolated and applied to the text as a whole. Scholar Javier Herrero describes the metaphoric value the narrator places on wine throughout the narrative as an image providing a thematic structural apparatus for the *Lazarillo* text. Herrero writes, "[t]he image of wine is one of the more significant of the Lazarillo. It plays a double role in the novella: by itself, it has a very rich metaphoric value; it also serves as a unifying structural element" (313). Similarly, critic Raymond Willis has argued for the structural necessity of the fifth tratado in connecting the opening chapters (Tratado I, II, and III)—where Lazarillo receives his "schooling" in roguery—with its final chapters, where Lazarillo's responsibility as narrator shifts into a role as spectator.[11] In the end, many limitations emerge from these types of readings,

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[10] See Alan Deyermond's chapter on "Structure" in *Lazarillo de Tormes: A Critical Guide* (1993), 33-44; and for a full bibliography of recent *Lazarillo* scholarship pages 99-109.

[11]See Stanley Nowak, Jr.'s "A New Perspective on Tratado Primero of Lazarillo de Tormes: The Structural Prophecy," in *Hispania*, Vol. 73, No.2 (May, 1990), pp. 324-331; Javier Herrero's "The Ending of Lazarillo: The Wine Against the Water," in *MLN*, Vol. 93, No. 2, Hispanic Issue. (Mar., 1978), pp. 313-319; and Raymond Willis's "Lazarillo and the Pardoner: The Artistic Necessity of the Fifth Tratado," in *Hispanic Review*, Vol. 27, No. 3, Joseph E. Gillet Memorial Volume, Part III. (July 1959), pp. 267-279.

where scholars try to shift from a micro to a macro level of understanding textual unity. Often their explanations fall somewhat short precisely because the reader cannot be altogether convinced that what otherwise reads as a fairly disjointed text does, in fact, contain a holistically unifying structure.

In his critical guide to the *Lazarillo* text, scholar Alan Deyermond argues that there is "something slightly arbitrary about the author's choice of a sevenfold division," going on to discuss the picaresque as a tradition that consistently fashions a textual structure in which "the episodes in most of the novels could be omitted or transposed without effecting any fundamental change" (33). He admits, however, that the *Lazarillo* is a unique narrative, that the episodes (tratados) in the text "could be transposed only at the cost of destroying the novel's pattern" (34). What then separates the *Lazarillo* text from others in the picaresque genre? And what exactly does Deyermond see as the text's indeterminate yet unifying pattern? Can the text be made to adhere to some holistic structure? Is there a single idea, image, or theme that might be identified as providing the key to the structural apparatus of *Lazarillo* as it was originally conceived of by its anonymous author? It is here that Bakhtin's writings on *parodia sacra* (sacred parody) can be incredibly useful to our understanding of the *Lazarillo* text. I would suggest that in the spirit of medieval carnival, as outlined by Bakhtin in his study of Rabelais, where sacred content is parodied in the tradition of "Paschal laughter," a similar argument can be made for a *sacramental structuring* apparatus organizing the episodes of the *Lazarillo.* Indeed, in the tradition of the sixteenth-century Dutch theologian, Desiderius Erasmus, the anonymous author of *Lazarillo*

plays with sacred content by making the Holy Sacraments central to the organization of his tratados in this originary picaresque tale.[12]

In the 1540s, by order of the Holy Roman Church, a diversity of Spanish intellectuals were convened at Trent for the purpose of officiating principles and lending credence to ideologies in the faithful and true practice of Christianity; this, in the first of many of the Church's spasmodic sessions of the 19th Ecumenical Council.[13] The Council of Trent, as it came to be known, assembled to address issues of Catholic theology and to combat Lutheranism's spread across the European continent. Discussing the Council's influence within the cultural backdrop of the Spanish Inquisition, historian Henry Kamen writes that those theologians "may have checked the seeds of heresy before they could be sown"; at least, that is, in Spain (92). Although the date of the *Lazarillo*'s composition remains indeterminate, it is likely that its anonymous author, in constructing the narrative, was working at some point during the convention of the Council.[14] Thus, it is essential in any reading of the *Lazarillo* to consider the importance of the Council's declarations and disseminations of theology, concerning issues as diverse as the Incarnation, Original Sin, and, as most important to our discussion here, the establishment and standardization of all seven of the Holy Sacraments.

I first began to discern that the Holy Sacraments were of great significance to the *Lazarillo* text as I was trying to make some sense of the extended meditations on the Eucharist

[12] Many thanks to my thesis advisor, Dr. Jessica Wolfe, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, for suggesting a comparative reading of Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* and *The Colloquies* in relation to my own investigation of sacred parody in the *Lazarillo.*

[13] See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pp.289-293, 311-335.

[14] Three extant editions of the *Lazarillo* survive, all originally published in 1554, at Burgos, Antwerp and Alcalá, respectively. These three editions are believed to be taken from a lost original text, arguably written, though not in circulation, as early as 1525. See Alan Deyermond's *Lazarillo de Tormes: A Critical Guide* (1993), pp. 11-14.

through the language gaming of the narrative's second chapter. In this tratado, Lazarillo has gone into the service of a local parish priest in the town of Maqueda. Nearly "cut short by hunger" (yo me finaba de hambre), Lazarillo very comically comes to fantasize about the "breadly-paradise" (mi paraíso panal) kept locked away in the priest's bread chest (37, 78). As he describes his discovery of the loaves in the midst of great hunger pangs, Lazarillo uses the language of the sacrament to the pleasure of his reader, describing the loaves as alike to "the 'face of God'" (como dicen, la cara de Dios)—a phrase alluding directly to the mystery of the Eucharist (35, 77). Taking this tratado to be emblematic of the larger unifying schema, I began to decode the problematic structuring apparatus of the tratados of *Lazarillo*, ascertaining that they could be explained easily through an alignment with the themes and images of the seven Holy Sacraments. Below, I have included a chart that outlines a method for organizing each tratado after its corresponding sacrament:

Tratado I – Lazarillo's Birth in the River Tormes – Baptism
Tratado II – Salvation through a "Breadly-Paradise" – Eucharist
Tratado III – Lazarillo & the Nobleman – Anointing the Sick (Extreme Unction)
Tratado IV – Perambulations with a Mercedarian Friar – Penance
Tratado V – Lazarillo & the Indulgence Seller – Confirmation
Tratado VI – Lazarillo: the Chaplain's Watter-Seller – Holy Orders
Tratado VII – Lazarillo Cuckolded by the Archpriest – Matrimony

The organization of this chart follows the traditional ordering of the seven sacraments with the exception of the "Confirmation" (traditionally presented as the second of the seven practiced)—here linked with the fifth tratado. In the context of the *Lazarillo*, there are a number of explanations for why this particular sacrament might have given our anonymous author such reservations concerning its earlier representation. Some reasons are to be given more credence than others. Along the lines of an argument for narrative consistency, it is reasonable that the *Lazarillo* author would have postponed Lazarillo's "Confirmation" in the ways of the Church (read, parodically, as a confirmation in the ways of corruption) until after his experience with the

Mercedarian Friar in the fourth tratado. An argument can also be made that the misplacement of the sacrament of Confirmation in the narrative ordering is due to some general confusion, at the time of the *Lazarillo*'s construction, about the importance of this particular sacrament. With the Council of Trent not having made any declarations concerning the Holy Sacraments until its seventh session (March, 1547),[15] and earlier Councils concerned more with issues of heresy and papal primacy, with matters of clerical discipline and general doctrinal reform, Confirmation became (and in many ways remains) the least identifiably celebratory of the sacraments.[16] Regardless of this minor inconsistency, it will be clear from the following reading what importance the seven Holy Sacraments have to the text's structure.

Tratado Primero begins with Lazarillo's self-conscious emphasis on his being "born in the river" (nacido en el río). This river-birth, and the wine-bathing at the hands of the blindman (el ciego) later (these episodes book-end the chapter), implicate Lazarillo in the practice of the sacrament of Baptism.[17] The second tratado, as previously discussed, gives an extended meditation on the Eucharist, through its evocation of the "breadly-paradise" (paraiso panal) or *body* of Christ (37, 93). Lazarillo's care for the nobleman (el escudero) in the third tratado is emblematic of the spiritual aid and comforting, remission of sins, and restorations to bodily health required from the sacrament known commonly as the Anointing of the Sick or, more archaically, as the Extreme Unction. Regardless of its extreme brevity and restricted details, I tend to read the fourth tratado as a mock-exercise in Penance—this mainly because sacramental

[15] See J. Waterworth's "The Seventh Session," in *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent* (London: Dolman, 1848). Accessed 25 Sept. 2008, at http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent.htm

[16] For details of The Council of Trent and its declarations, see J. Waterworth's, *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent* (London: Dolman, 1848).

[17] Additionally, Deyermond points out that the language used to describe Lazarillo's father mimics the language used to describe John the Baptist in the Gospels. See Deyermond, 24.

penance requires a very real and personal confession and, as many commentators have argued, in the fourth tratado, Lazarillo refuses to do just that. The fifth tratado could also be argued to align with Penance, considering Lazarillo's master here is an "indulgence seller" (el buldero). However, as previously argued, the spurious example presented by the religious con-man, el buldero, in the issuing of the papal bulls, lends itself to a reading of Lazarillo's Confirmation into the specious lifestyle of the rural clergy present in the sixteenth-century Spain—an initiation that justifies his acceptance of certain injustices in the final two tratados. In the sixth and seventh tratados, which correspond to Holy Orders and Matrimony, respectively, Lazarillo abandons his job as a "water-seller" (a echar agua por la ciudad) in favor of an adulterous marriage in which he is cuckolded by the Archpriest. Although the reading of the final three tractados is, at times, complicated by the ambiguous position of the sacrament of Confirmation, one can generally see the importance of the seven Holy Sacraments to the organizing schema of this text. Sacred parody, thus, functions to link, thematically, the seven Holy Sacraments to the seven individual tratados in the *Lazarillo*. This allegorical connection of the chapters of the text to the Holy Sacraments is an important distinction to make when considering a structural reading of the text. I should make clear that this alignment is not one that places the emphasis on Lazarillo's several masters (which might be more typical to the picaresque genre). Lest we forget, the sixth tratado involves Lazarillo's apprenticeship to two masters (something the New Testament Gospel writers tell us, no man can do): the "painter of tambourines" (un maestro de pintar panderos) and the Chaplain.

From the reading I have presented above, it should be clear that the progression of Lazarillo's life comes as a recognition and initiation (or as a parodic representation and false-achievement) of the seven Holy Sacraments. As proper to the idea of parodic inversion, the

seven deadly sins are also highlighted in their relation to the *Lazarillo* and his false-achievement of the sacraments; to the extent that they are, at times, made to function as a play (with difference) on the Holy Sacraments themselves.[18] I will conclude here my brief summary and reading of each of the *Lazarillo* tratadoes, as they relate to the particular sacraments as they were established and standardized by the Council of Trent. Some critics may be inclined to disagree with this structuring. Some may want to rearrange my alignment for a more agreeable reading of the text along lines of which, thematically, they are more familiar and comfortable. Regardless of these responses and usages, I believe this reading of sacred parody as the dominant technique applied by our anonymous *Lazarillo* author for the overall structuring and unifying of the text, alleviates much of the prior confusion and skepticism concerning its unity, and is presented, with the hopes of advancing scholarship in this regard.

PARODIC ALLUSION AND THE PLAY OF HUMOR-AS-DIFFERENCE

Sacred parody, as I have been discussing it in this text (that is, as an organizing technique used by the *Lazarillo* author), functions through a complicated process of revisionary allusion. Although the Holy Sacraments are given structural reference, the sacred as allusion exists in the text as a play with, and on, humor-as-difference. The *Lazarillo* invites its readers to laugh, and through this laughter to form new meanings and connections between aspects of the sacred and the profane. This occurs through the text's treatment of the sacraments, through its reapplication of scripture and other religious content. As a literary mechanism, allusion is always, at one moment, internal and *interior* to the language of a constructed text—acting as a "trace" in the Derridean sense to a "hypotext" or "architext," to pull a word-concept from French narratologist,

[18] That is, the seven deadly sins form a kind of unholy seven sacraments.

Gérard Genette.[19] In the next moment, that is, as we move beyond the differing/deferring of meaning present in the revisionary (parodic) instance, the allusion is *superficial* and sliding—turning away from the reader or audience as they stumble into the primary literary reference to swift modes and move towards a new plateau of meaning. Thus allusions shape a reader's immediate knowledge in a way that is fleeting and artificial—in a way that is *interferent* in the recognition of true authorial intent. That is to say, a writer may feature an allusion to a primary text (an "architext") in which a turn of phrase in the text may contain the key to releasing that allusion. However, the meaning contained in that allusion is never meant to rise above the level of subtext (and often never might) and functions, additionally, as a temporary distraction for the reader. The reader comes to accept the context of meaning in which the allusion operates, while the author moves towards a reorganization of meanings in a subversive way, not immediately recognizable in the context of the allusion as the original moment of meaning-production.

Where readers, and critics, often "recognize" an allusion in a text, the fleeting nature of the allusion causes a temporary shift in its surface meaning, which is eventually displaced by the author's original intent. By way of a concrete example, let us turn our attention to the end of the second tratado. Here, Lazarillo makes the ironic statement: "I was pleased to put out one of my own eyes in order to put out both of his"—holgábame a mí de quebrar un ojo por quebrar dos (17, 65). I would like to suggest that the allusion here, *superficially*, is to the biblical saying—"an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"—though presented in a strangely perverted, and ironically humorous, context, just as much of the religious content in this text happens to be (Mt. 5:38; Lev. 24:20). The alluded to scriptural element ("eye for an eye"), although present for me as a reader,

[19] For his discussion of the distinction between types of transtextual parodying, see Gennete's *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), Transl. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky, pp 1-30.

might pass unnoticed by another reader in the same instance and presentation.[20] Also, though the allusion exists to me as a knowledgeable reader, it is not being used in the original sacred context. Thus, the meaning of the allusion is subverted by the intentions of the use of the allusion by the *Lazarillo*'s anonymous author. In this way, I see the biblical allusions in the *Lazarillo* operating with a double-bind, and in a double-context; both superficially (or *interferantly*—closer to the surface where the recognition of meaning is left up to the knowledge of the reader) and *substantively*, or with a covert authorial desire to modify meaning in the moment of slippage between original context and original authorial intent. This is a unique distinction to be made about parodic allusion—a distinction that I believe is vital to make as we return to our previous discussion of the meditations on the Eucharist in the second tratado.

Many scholars seem to overlook these aspects of humorous parody in the *Lazarillo*, or choose to read the more raucous and burlesque parody as providing the only humor in the text. Yet, as we revisit the description of the "breadly-paradise" in the second tratado, it seems clear that the nature of Lazarillo's word-play is operating on many different epistemological levels. First, I would suggest, as readers we laugh at the absurdity of such a conflation. The juxtaposition of the Eucharist with a young boy's imagined feast of crusty loaves, a "breadly-paradise," seems, on the first pass, a strangely humorous association to be making. Yet, upon a closer inspection, this connection is very natural to the narrative context. The loaves in the bread-chest, for instance, are alike in every regard—(materially, that is) to the bread of the Eucharist. Individual readers may want to distinguish some differences based on their reading of narrative context, but the physical reality of loaves of bread being used for the partaking of the Eucharist presents a perfectly accurate historical reality. For the special reader who identifies the Eucharist

[20] In his note, for example, Francisco Rico makes no mention of the biblical allusion, but refers instead to 'una fábula de Aviano.' See Rico, p65, note 83.

with the body of Christ (through the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation), Lazarillo's conflation becomes a blasphemous account of a very sacred event. It seems the sacred is being translated into the profane as the text figures Lazarillo as a communicant, partaking of the holiest of sacraments. It might, however, also be beneficial to look at how the text translates the sacred by way of a mediation into the profane.

One cannot help but laugh in disbelief at the mock sincerity of the young Lazarillo's understanding of the Eucharistic sacrament. With his insistence on the presence of the divine in this salvific moment, the humor of the scene magnifies. The scene reads:

> …by chance there came to my door a tinker, who I think was an angel sent to me by the hand of God in that guise. He asked me if I had anything to mend. "You'd find plenty to do if you wanted to mend me, and you'd be doing plenty if you helped me out," I said quietly, without his hearing.
> (Appelbaum 35)

> …llegóse acaso a mí puerta un calderero, el cual yo creo que fue angel enviado a mí por la mano de Dios en aquel hábito. Preguntóme si tenía algo que adobar. «En mí teníades bien qué hacer y no haríades poco si me remediásedes», dije paso, que no me oyó.
> (Rico 77)

And later:

> The angelic tinker began trying out one [key] after another in the big bunch he was carrying, and I began helping him with my feeble prayers. Unexpectedly, I caught sight of the "face of God," as the saying is—that is, the loaves of bread—inside the box.
> (Appelbaum 35)

> Comenzó a probar el angélico calderero una y otra de un gran sartal que dellas traía, y yo ayudalle con mis flacas oraciones. Cuando no me cato, veo en figura de panes, como dicen, la cara de Dios dentro del arcaz.
> (Rico 77-78)

And finally:

> To console myself, I opened the box and, at sight of the bread, I began to worship it, since I didn't dare to receive it.
> (Appelbaum 37)

> Yo, por consolarme, abro el arca, y como vi el pan, comencélo de adorer, no osando rescebillo.
> (Rico 79)

It is important to note the reliance on the sacred (both Stanley Appelbaum and Francisco Rico include, in their respective texts, notes concerning the language of this scene being imitative of the Holy Communion) in the creation of the scene's comic element. In his article, "The Dialectic of the Sacred and the Comic," in the collection of essays, *Holy Laughter: Essays on Religion in the Comic Perspective* (1969), Editor M. Conrad Hyers discusses the history of the comic and its interplay with the sacred in literature and culture.[21] Hyers argues that the two forms have always shared a close relationship—that one is hardly exclusive of the other. "The sacred needs the comic as much as the comic needs the sacred;" he writes, continuing: "for the comic apart from its basis in the sacred, or the sacred apart from the qualifications of the comic, are equal prey to distortion" (209). We find, here, that the transformation of the sacred by the profane operates as a two-way practice. In the same moment that the sacred is degraded by the profane, there is also an elevation of the profane to the level of the sacred (something I will return to later in this essay). *Lazarillo*, in effect, enacts a breakdown in the barriers between the categories of the sacred and the profane through the enactment of his humorous parody of the partaking of the Eucharist. As we will see, this type of parodying works to subvert and transform traditional structures of meaning, both in relation to the sacred and also to the vulgar or profane.

THEMES OF DESCENT: JESUS THE NAZARENE BECOMES LAZARILLO DE TORMES

For Lazarillo, the Eucharist, in its material form (that is, as the bread and wine), does not properly signify the deeper mysteries of Christ or Christian (Catholic) theology. Thus, his references to transubstantiation are ironic in character and illicit of a humorous laughter as a result of the distance created from his misinformed use and the "true" meaning of the sacred event. Instead of signifying what is present in the sacred moment of the Eucharist, Christ's body

[21] See M. Conrad Hyers's *Holy Laughter: Essays on Religion in the Comic Perspective* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), pp. 1-27, 208-240.

and blood, Lazarillo's blasphemy shows what is truly absent (the resurrected Christ and the redemption his resurrection signifies for humanity). By distancing the sacred aspects of the Eucharist through the grotesque imagery of consumption and satiric allusion to Lazarillo as an irreverent communicant, the narrative simultaneously evokes the importance of the sacrament to true-believers and undercuts its importance to the text's protagonist. Ironically, this type of humor can be seen as a return to the full importance of the sacred event (presenting in Lazarillo's act of communion a moment of salvific redemption emblematic of that of the true-believer). The act is at one moment dissociated from the sacramental seriousness and also sharing in that seriousness. It is in the positive, regenerative aspects of laughter, as described by Bakhtin as pervasive in sixteenth-century sacred parody, that the *Lazarillo* operates. At times it reads as a simplistically irreverent tale. Yet, throughout the text, humor occupies a unique position for redirecting our investigations and understandings of sacred concepts. Once seen through the lens of sacred parody, the humor of the text gives many of the scenes and images a truly subversive resonance that can be critical, but also conciliatory. Bakhtin writes:

> Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it… (23)

In this way, laughter is used to interrogate Christ and the Christian faith, but also to reconcile experience to belief. At points the interrogation moves into the grotesque, eventually forcing the reader to ask whether *Lazarillo* presents a grotesque depiction of a real religion or a realistic depiction of a grotesque religion? In both cases, humor helps keep the crazy world of text, the world of early-sixteenth century Inquisition Spain—a world of poverty, destitution, extreme violence, religious conversion and religious paranoia—from being completely devoid of happiness. Scholars have spent significant pages trying to comprehend this juxtaposition of

humor within the Lazarillo's tragic themes, attempting to grasp the deep pathos of Lazarillo's impoverished condition. Scholar Anne Cruz, for example, has written extensively of the horrors of poverty experienced by real-life *pícaroes* in early modern Spain. We will return to her arguments, but for now it is important to note that often humor serves the purpose of keeping a society (and religious zealots) humane. As Hyers notes, "comedy humanizes tragedy in the same way that is humanizes the sacred" (*Holy Laughter* 232). Though humorous episodes are embedded throughout the *Lazarillo* text—episodes that often lead to an eruption in laughter—the true brutality and self-degradation (that many have read as tragic) becomes even more laudable and joyous when seen from the critical position of sacred parody.

LAZARILLO: TRAGIC TALE THAT ENDS WELL OR UPROARIOUS FARCE THAT MAKES LIGHT OF SUFFERING?

La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes presents an infamous little tale from sixteenth-century, Inquisition Spain in which the driving force and energy of the narrative lies in the credibility of an avowed sinner. Lázaro (the proper name of the narrator)—*que Dios perdone*—at times, through his own description, is such a disreputable scoundrel that it is difficult for readers to accept he was ever an innocent *mozo* (and perhaps he truly never was). [22] In stark contrast to this character is the figure of Jesus Christ as presented in the New Testament Gospels. As the hero of that sacred text, Christ, from birth, is implicated in the purity of the divine. Yet, the most heroic aspect of his story involves the coupling of his transcendent (divine) nature with an ultimately fallible (human) flesh—a union that begs the question of what the human aspect of that alignment really entails. It is not likely that one would easily mistake the divine-Christ with our

[22] Anne Cruz (as well as Deyermond and others) makes the point that *Lazarillo* is "the first Spanish narrative to elevate an itinerant beggar to the status of a major protagonist," a point which, in relating the text to the Gospels, illuminates the nature of sacred parody put into operation by our anonymous author—that is, a parody which revisits Christ's story arch, marking where the divine (God) becomes man (Jesus) through a process of descent (Incarnation) into a lower world (5). With *Lazarillo,* man is degraded through a similar descent into poverty and spiritual corruption.

picaresque anti-hero, Lazarillo. The mere juxtaposition of these two figures seems to do the work of further accentuating their differences. Yet (and herewith lies the trouble with reading Lazarillo's "grosera nonada" as a *parodia sacra*) once the image of Christ is set before our minds in close connection and correlation with the image of Lazarillo, something strange, and almost inescapable, begins to happen. We realize that Lazarillo, in ways both grotesque and revelatory, reflects Christ. And, as I hope to show shortly, the divine Christ can equally be said to reflect Lazarillo.[23]

Previous *Lazarillo* scholarship has focused narrowly on the slightly more obvious, homonymic connections between the picaresque Lázaro and his New Testament near-namesakes, Lazarus-the-Poor of St. Luke's Gospel and Lazarus-the-Resurrected of the Gospel of John.[24] Both figures of Lazarus provide a fascinating point of comparison for the *Lazarillo,* and both offer a path for reading Lazarillo's connection to Christ. As previously mentioned, scholar Anne Cruz has given us the most nuanced discussion of poverty in the *Lazarillo* through her engagement with the gospel character, Lazarus-the-Poor—a leper and beggar who experiences a reversal of fortunes following his death, or descent from this world (Luke 16:19-25). [25] Jesus tells the story of this Lazarus in a parable to his disciples. To recount briefly:

> There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.
> (Holy Bible, NIV)

[23] [See Note 9]

[24] Including Anne Cruz, pp. 11-13; Deyermond, pp. 27-32; and Maiorino, pp. 104, 108-114.

[25] See Anne Cruz, pp. 11-15.

The balancing reversal of fates that takes place in this parable becomes emblematic of the Christian ethos. Though Lazarus-the-Poor has suffered here on earth, the Rich man is set to suffer all eternity. Death, as is commonly argued, is the great equalizer. Perhaps that is the lesson Christ seeks to teach, though our reading of the *Lazarillo* offers something of an alternative. Anne Cruz writes, "Lazarillo is a tale of poverty, not merely of Lazarillo's, but of poverty itself, of the relationship between society and its poor" (*Discourses of Poverty* 4). In the Gospel parable, Christ is making a point about the disparities of wealth in society—about the relationship between society's rich and its poor. Beyond this interrogation, however, Christ's parable acts as a lesson to the spiritually impoverished and the moral poor. Since it is not clear that Lazarus is in heaven because he has suffered on earth, or that the Rich man is in hell because he achieved great wealth, what remains earnest is the divide that must be maintained in either situation. Just as Lazarus was not aided by the Rich man on earth, the Rich man is not to be aided by Lazarus in the afterlife. This divide between the haves and the have-nots becomes a central theme to Lazarillo's narrative. As Anne Cruz writes, "[a]t the time of its publication…by documenting the pícaro's literary birth, his role as social *pharmakos*, and his prefiguration of the increasingly marginalized poor, the *Lazarillo de Tormes* at once textualizes and engages in the historical conflicts prevalent in the mid-sixteenth century" (38). Lazarillo is born into poverty and so the entire movement of the text is plotted to show his attempts to circumvent that originary designation. By the end of the text he appears to have achieved this, at least in terms of material wealth and subsistence needs, but, it would seem, at the expense of his spiritual wealth. What then does his connection to this first Lazarus, Lazarus-the-Leper, Lazarus-the-Poor, mean in relation tour understanding of spiritual poverty and its relationship to material destitution?

The connection between Lazarus-the-Poor and Lázaro is true enough, but let us consider now that other biblical Lazarus, Christ's Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary. The Gospel of John reads:

> There was a man named Lazarus who had fallen ill. His home was at Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha… On his arrival Jesus found that Lazarus had already been four days in the tomb… Jesus, again deeply moved, went to the tomb. It was a cave, with a stone placed against it… Then he raised his voice in a great cry: 'Lazarus, come out.' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with linen bandages, his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said, 'Loose him; let him go.'
> (John 11:1, 17, 38, 43-44; Holy Bible, REB)

As precursor to Christ's resurrection, symbolically, this is a powerful scene—imbued, as it is, in the spectacular vision of a return from the certainty of death. Indeed, Lazarus's revivification acts as a direct, biblical sign (and foreshadowing) of Christ's crucifixion, death, and resurrection. Narratologically, the late Gospel writer uses the episode of the resurrected-Lazarus to portend the deeper mystery and power of the resurrected-Christ. In this way, Lazarus becomes the first literary "Christ-figure"—aligned, as he is, to the divine through the language of rebirth and resurrection.

Lazarillo, too, is shrouded in the language and imagery of death, rebirth, and resurrection. In the first *tratado*, he is brought back to life by the blindman's wine-bathing (el vino mil te ha dado la vida). In the second *tratado*, he is rescued from the brink of death by the discovery of his "breadly-paradise," and again (in the second tratado), after a scene of extended violence against Lazarillo's body by the *clérigo*, he tells us: "I spent the next three days 'in the belly of the whale'"—sucedió en aquellos tres días... porque los tuve en el vientre de la ballena, giving yet another parodic allusion to the scriptural echoes of Christ's death as presented in the Gospel of

Matthew (47, 86).[26] Of course, this allusion is also to the Hebrew prophet Jonah, whose mythic journey in the belly of the whale ("great fish") prefigures Christ's narrative of resurrection. As the episode continues we return to the imagery of the resurrected-Lazarus, with Lazarillo's "head all plastered and full of oils and ointments—la cabeza toda emplastada y llena de aceitas y ungüentos (47, 86)," reflecting the 'linen bandages' and 'face wrapped in a cloth' of Lazarus's resurrection scene. The reference to oils (*aceitas*) and ointment (*ungüentos*), in this regenerative context, should also be read as an implication of the connection between the three resurrected figures: Lázaro, Lazarus, and Christ. At the time of its publication, the *Lazarillo's* contemporary Christian audience would certainly have recalled that Mary (Lazarus's sister), following the resurrection of her brother, went to anoint the feet of Christ with oil and perfumes, coincidentally, in preparation for his own crucifixion (John 12:4). In this light, the importance of Lázaro's name, in connection with the resurrected, biblical Lazarus, serves to implicate him in the redemptive story of Christ's resurrection. By supplying the nominal link to the Gospel of St. John's Resurrected-Lazarus, the anonymous author of our picaresque tale implicates his protagonist, Lázaro, in a share, and union with, the divine mystery of the risen-Christ. We must ask then what effects the creation of a *grotesque* Christ-figure such as Lazarillo has on the original. If the divine-Christ comes to earth without sin, for the redemption of mankind, how does Lázaro, as a fraudulent stand-in Christ-figure, provide a commentary on the nature, not of his divinity, but of Christ's humanity? Because the redemptive power of Christ lies in his death and resurrection, we must ask, additionally, how death functions in the *Lazarillo* text. Is our anonymous author

[26] In Matthew 12:40, Christ states: "Just as Jonah was in the sea monster's belly for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the bowels of the earth (REB)." My main purpose for including allusions of this nature is to show that Lázaro, as the organizing persona of the narrative, is drawing explicit connections between himself and Christ (and perhaps to reach some resolution concerning these comparisons suggested by our anonymous author).

working toward some theory of social, clerical, or even personal redemption?[27] And how does Lazarillo's connection to Christ corrupt or clarify our ideas of Christ's humanity and the doctrine of the Incarnation as it describes the hybridization of Christ's divine and human natures?

To say that *Lazarillo* presents us, as readers, with a literary 'Christ-figure' is to begin to understand the nature of the parodic signifying at work in this picaresque fiction. Often the text presents a burlesque travestying of scripture, sacred prayers, and litanies, as described by Bakhtin in the tradition of *parodia sacra*. At other times, however, the narrative likes to perform a sort of grotesque inversion of the thematic structures and motifs of its source materials. For example, the relationship between Christ and the mob as mirrored in the relationship between Lazarillo and the clergy. The Gospels are constantly depicting Christ as a man of the people. When nominal generic place-holders are needed, and used, they describe Christ surrounded by "the poor," "the sick," "the impure," "the criminal," "the demon-possessed," even the sexually licentious ("prostitutes"). Lazarillo, on the other hand, spends most of his time with clergymen, or on the periphery of the Church. Where Christ finds redeemable qualities such as faith, charity, kindness, among his coterie of supporters; Lázaro describes 'la avaricia' of the *clerigo* (73), the *fraile de la Merced* who is a 'Gran enemigo del coro' (111), and, in the end, the *señor arcipreste* who is rumored to be sleeping with his wife (121).

In the dedicatory letter to his *Paraphrase on the Gospel of John*, Desiderius Erasmus examines the pervasive themes of the Gospel as they involve the religious rhetoric of redemption and atonement through the Incarnation of Jesus, his death, and resurrection. He writes: "I was aware that [St. John's] grand theme is even more majestic, being mainly concerned as it is with the exposition of those *hidden mysteries of the divine nature and its marvelous association with*

[27] In the section of this paper subtitled, *The Non-Redemptive Narrative*, I attempt to offer an answer to these questions by reading Lázaro's relationship to the *Dios* and *Vuestra Merced* of the text.

our own" (2) (my italics).[28] Here, Erasmus highlights a theme of connection that arguably provides the meta-trope for the *Lazarillo* allusions to Christ. It is that ageless literary theme of descent and return; that is, descent from a height of perfect order, graciousness, and beauty, into a lower world, shrouded in corruption and degradation. In coupling God's "divine nature" with the utter imperfection and fallibility of the human flesh, the Gospels reenact this theme of descent-and-return on a super-natural (and macrocosmic) scale. *Lazarillo* does this to the next degree, bringing the human-Christ (though described as without sin) down to the level of the impure and vulgar. Following in this vein, Erasmus adds:

> What is frailer than human flesh, or more despised? What is mightier than God, or more sublime? ...But he truly put on a human body; that is, he put on the whole nature of a man, not even disdaining the part by which we are in bondage to death (22, 23).

God condescends to take on the weak, mortal, fallible flesh of humanity—a flesh, as we see in *Lazarillo*, that is capable of being beaten and bruised, lacerated and lost. Lazarillo, in fact, carriers a weakened body and flesh that acts as a site of pain and invites fear. Making the choice to assume humanity's nature by taking on his human flesh raises many questions as to whether the Incarnation of Christ goes beyond the standard ideas present in a descent narrative. Is there something less than up-standing in Christ's story—something more sinister that moves beyond the account given us by the Gospel writers? Does Lázaro as a Christ-figure help clarify our understanding of the human aspects of the Incarnation? That is, does God's humanation (or humanization, in the existential process) approach the corruptibility of a man like Lázaro, whose impulse to sin is so great and unprecedented that the mere juxtaposition to Christ seems

[28] Unfortunately, the publisher's of the English translations of the *Collected Works of Erasmus* have not yet completed that magnificent piece of scholarship. In cases where I would have benefited from a passage-to-passage comparison of Erasmus's paraphrase and the Holy Scripture, I have instead had to consider works thematically. I, namely, would have liked to work with his paraphrase of the first part of the Gospel of Luke and the paraphrase on the Gospel of Matthew.

incongruous? Is it more likely for a God that becomes man, in all his worldly imperfection and corruptibility, to appear closer to the scheming, licentious, glutton Lázaro—versus the descriptions of the protagonist in the New Testament Gospels, who comes across more in the romantic heroic tradition, above corruption, removed from desire, and untouched by the need to express any human vice or passion. Christ even, if this can be fairly accessed from the Gospel narratives, disdains to allow himself even the human propensity towards humor (what some have argued separates man from baser things). *Lazarillo*, as the first picaresque narrative, enacts the "what-if" in hypothetical answer to such questions and in the process presents readers with a re-envisioned, diabolical Christ. Or course if this is true—that the corruptibility of Christ is implicated in his connection to Lazarillo—its opposite must also have some significance; that is, that Lazarillo could share in the divine.

THEMES OF ASCENT: LAZARILLO DISCOVERING HIS DIVINITY

Up until now I have been discussing Christ's Incarnation, in light of the *Lazarillo* text, as a narrative of descent. The divine, as such, has been given over to degradation and corruption by the taking on of human flesh. We see this reflected in the polyphagic nature of Lázaro, a point I will return to shortly in this essay, as a boy whose appetite can never be satiated—leading, ultimately, to his spiritual corruption (keeping with the theme of descent). There is, however, another way of reading the Incarnation—a reading influenced by Ronald Paulson's study of *Hogarth's Harlot* (2003). Paulson writes:

> The Incarnation [elicits] two interpretations, stressing either God's divinity or his humanity: In one, God has chosen to humble himself, enfleshing himself in weakness—thereby showing his love; in the other, *he has chosen to sacralize that weak flesh*. If in the first God condescends into flesh, in the second he ennobles (or *re*ennobles, since before the Fall, man had been created in God's image…
> (6) (my italics)

Here, the theme of descent is inverted. God condescends to put on human flesh, but it is in order to consecrate that flesh, to return it to the higher order from which it originated. Erasmus echoes these sentiments when he writes, "it is not surprising if a human being is somehow reshaped to share in the divine nature" (22). In fact, this theme of ascent seems to be equally central to the *Lazarillo*. Recall, again, the second tratado's meditation on the Eucharist. Lazarillo's language in that chapter, although ironic, engages the idea of the divine's union with the common, with everyday material objects, such as bread and wine—objects that (in addition to providing sustenance) become symbols of Lazarillo's greed, gluttony, licentiousness and lust. Yes, the divine takes on human flesh that is capable of committing any numbers of these transgressions—but, in committing them, repositions our understanding of them as human vice. In this way, the different aspects of the divine—aspects such as grace, mercy, compassion, etc.—begin to slip into the lower realm, redefining that realm and "corrupting" its structuring with a new understanding of humanity and the divinity of his fleshly desires. Recall that bread becomes a metonymy for Christ's redemptive body. These types of metonymic and symbolic associations locate God's divine nature in the material and the worldly.

In the final tratado, even Lázaro has a moment of self-sacrifice that leads to (or at least attempts to achieve) greater social redemption. Though most scholars read his resolution with being cuckolded as a sign of his spiritual corruption, this event too can be shown from its inverted backside. By sacrificing his egoistic manhood (at the level of his pride), Lazarillo attempts to redeem his adulterous wife—a redemption that takes him deeper into the lower order of cuckolding, but also one that parodies Christ's own sacrifice in the crucifixion for the sins of mankind. In this realignment, we find that Lázaro is able to redeem himself, and his past corruptions, through his attempt to redeem his wife. For, if we recall his linguistic synecdoche,

"she's as good a woman as any dwelling within the gates of Toledo"—es tan Buena mujer como vive dentro de las puertas de Toledo, we see that Lazarillo connects his wife's behavior to that of all the women of Toledo (103, 124). In defending his adulterous wife, he defends all the women of Toledo, and ultimately all of the corruption of the narrative. It is significant that this redemption is to be shared with Lazarillo's mother, whose earlier promiscuity implicates her with Lazarillo's wife at the end of the novel. Just as Mary, the mother of Christ, is sanctified by her birthing of Jesus, so too must Lazarillo's mother be redeemed in order to continue the text's revision of Christ's story. This last attempt to redeem the women of the text, especially his own mother, becomes especially important to reading Lazarillo as a literary Christ-figure.

Another aspect of Lazarillo's salvific nature and his ability to redeem the corruptibility (or sins) of everyone in the text, comes in his invocations to the divine. Regarding prayer, Erasmus writes, "prayer is that secret meeting place where the human mind, having shaken off haunting anxieties about earthly things and being carried up, in a way, to heaven, converses with God" (*Paraphrase on Luke* 2). This assertion, on the surface, could not seem any further from the Lazarillo's invocations. Yet, throughout the text, the word *Dios* appears at a rate more frequent than almost any other—a total of seventy-one times (not including the five additional occurrences in the Alcalá edition). With the predominance of Lazarillo's call on "God" for help, we are compelled to remember Christ's own frequent departures for solitary prayer—particularly the scene in the garden of Gethsemane in which Christ, momentarily, shuns his responsibility in dying for man's salvation, by asking God to "take this cup [from him]" (Mt.26:36-45, Mk 14:32-41). It is obvious that the *Lazarillo*'s anonymous author saw this moment in the Christian, redemptive narrative as essential to understanding the human-nature of Christ. It is interesting,

however, to consider how swiftly the word, "Dios", dissipates toward the end of the text.[29] Lazarillo's depiction of a highly-deistic *Dios (*that is, one who is neither spiteful nor demanding, and not very much involved) rejects Ecumenical understandings of God's involvement in human affairs and the relationship between prayer and his mercy. This revision is echoed in Lázaro's responses to the "Vuestra Merced" figure throughout the narrative. Though he does provide some limited lip service to the original request set forth in the prologue, rarely does Lazarillo's anxiety betray any fear of recourse for the transgressions he has commented. Neither is there any explicit concern that his terse account of the Mercedarian Friar in the fourth tratado will result in any serious reprisals. There is no apprehension in Lazarillo's address to 'Vuestra Merced,' who is himself implicated in the corruption of the narrative through the character of the Squire whom Lazarillo alternately calls "Señor" and "Vuestra Merced." In the end, unlike Christ in Gethsemane, Lázaro makes no drastic appeals to "Your Honor" (or God) for mercy. Nor does he wish to remove the burden he must carry to redeem his wife, the women of Toledo, his mother, and all the corrupt clergy and characters of the text. Often, this incites feelings of hopelessness for readers, and critics, remarking his choice to remain in the marriage in the closing scenes of the text. Because Lazarillo is not seeking redemption solely for himself, his sacrifice should be read more, optimistically, in the vein of Christ's death and resurrection

Before concluding this essay, it is important to consider the nature of Lazarillo's lowly-birth and the trials of his youth as a result of his polyphagic nature. Above all else, Lazarillo's mother wishes that her *mozo* doesn't "turn out to be a worse man than [his] father"—no sadría peor hombre que mi padre (9, 58). In light of the family's earliest situation, this seems a fairly

[29] The word *Dios* appears 13 times in the first tratado, 17 in the second, 34 in the third, and then declines significantly in the fourth (0), fifth (3), sixth (0), and seventh (4). Additionally, *Dios* is not invoked in the prologue. This can be compared to the *Vuestra Merced* figure that is featured more systematically in the text: first (6), second (0), third (6), fourth (0), fifth (0), sixth (0), and seventh (5).

facetious request—that is to say, how much worse than Tomé Gonzales, a *molinero* accused and condemned for stealing grain from the poorest of townspeople, could one become? Yet, given a closer reading, we begin to see that there is something rather mysterious about this crime of Lazarillo's father and, in relation to that ambiguity, something redeemable, even noble, about Tomé Gonzales's character. If we are to take the word of Lázaro, the narrator, then Tomé Gonzales had served as superintendant at the town watermill ("tenía cargo de proveer una molienda de una aceña") for over fifteen years (54). During that time not a single accusation, incident, or charge had ever been brought against him. Yet, by Lazarillo's eighth year ("yo niño de ocho años"), something has dramatically changed (54). At that time Señor Gonzales is accused of "bleeding the sacks"—achacaron a mi padre ciertas sangrias mal hechas en los costales") and, as we are told, "was arrested, confessed and didn't deny it, and suffered punishment at the hands of justice"—fue preso, y confesó, y no negó, y padeció persecución por justicia (5, 54). In another, and the earliest, parodic allusion of the text, Lazarillo seems to pervert Christ's Sermon on the Mount—"Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of right"—but a closer reading of the text might raise questions regarding Señor Gonzales culpability in the theft and might dissuade us from completely corrupting the meaning of the beatitude as presented by the text's anonymous author (Mt. 5:10).

Why would someone, having served honestly for almost fifteen years, suddenly resort to theft? Unlike Zaide (the black lover of Lazarillo's widowed mother) who steals in order to support his new-born son, we find that Lazarillo is eight years old at the time of this transgression (no longer in imminent danger of starvation). The argument could be made that Señor Gonzales had been "bleeding the sacks" for a longer period of time, and that the neighbors had finally caught on to his ways. This explanation, however, seems highly unlikely in a

narrative where questions of responsibility for corrupt action is hardly ever left ambiguous, the significance of poverty and subsistence needs causing that corruption reigning supreme as the chief social commentary in the text. As scholar Giancarlo Maiorino puts it, “hunger determines the value of life itself (25).” A third possibility provided by the narrative context shifts the accusatory finger in the direction of the often scheming and unbelievably polyphagic, Lazarillo. Is the boy the true culprit of this crime? Does Señor Gonzales admit to it only in order to protect his misguided son? In reading the text as a commentary on the humanity of Christ, we must ask: If Christ’s birth raised his parents in honor and prestige, is the exact opposite true for Lazarillo’s parents? The peculiar play on Christ’s Sermon, “suffered punishment at the hands of justice”—padeció persecución por justicia, makes this a particularly favorable reading (5, 54). Later, when Lázaro describes his theft of the blindman’s food rations, he uses language similar (“a coser sangraba el avariento fardel”) to that of the earlier scene (“ciertas sangrías mal hechas en los costales”) (62 and 54, respectively). It appears that Lazarillo has picked up a few tricks before becoming a guide for the blind man—tricks that allow him to pursue his own carnal happiness by satisfying his most constant desire: the desire to eat.

No matter how much the young Lázaro is fed, he does not seem capable of satisfying his basest desires and voracious appetite. This can be read as another inversion of Christ’s story, where the Gospels highlight Christ’s most consistent trait—feeding the multitudes both materially and spiritually. Lazarillo, in contradistinction, is constantly eating and taking the food of others. Over the course of the initial three tratados, it seems clear that Lazarillo’s largest fear, concern, and desire in this world is for eating. In the same scene where we find him “bleeding” the blind man’s sack, he describes himself as “taking not just a rationed portion of bread, but big pieces, as well as fried bacon and sausage”—no por tasa pan, mas buenos pedazos, torreznos y

longaniza (13, 62). Later, with the clérigo, he says, "I had *recklessly* helped myself to more than my normal portion"—me desmandara a más de mi tasa, me costara caro (31, 74). In one breath he claims that the priest "used to eat like a wolf" (comía como lobo) and in the next he admits that he would join the priest in these exhaustive dinners. In the end, it appears, more than being starved, Lazarillo has a hunger that cannot be satisfied. He simply consumes until there is nothing left. Thus, his polyphagic nature provides a commentary on one of Christ's most memorable teachings. When confronted by the devil during his forty-day fast in the desert, being tempted to transform a stone into bread, Christ, very astutely responds to Satan, "It is written: 'Man is not to live on bread alone'" (Luke 4:4). Likewise, Lazarillo cannot live by bread alone, but consumes at a rate that reinforces the idea of Christ's teachings—that no man is satisfied simply by the meeting of his subsistence needs, but must also be nourished spiritually as well.

CONCLUSION:
THE PLAY OF LAZARILLO SIGNIFYING THE NOVEL AS A GENRE

I began this paper with a quotation from the twentieth-century Argentine writer, Jorge Luis Borges. In his short-story (essay), "The Three Versions of Judas," Borges theorizes a mode for understanding the nature of Christ, in both his divinity and humanity, through an analytical (parodic) reading and comparison of the nature of Judas.[30] The narrator in Borges's story retells the events of the life of German heresiarch, "Nils Runeberg," a scholar who beliefs he has discovered the "true" designation of the divine Incarnation, in the personage of Judas Iscariot. Runeberg's assumption is that while Christ, historically, has received the "glory" for being the redemptive Messiah of all humanity, the true Incarnation and redemption of mankind took place, beyond the crucifixion scene and spotlight, in the form of a person willing to enact a betrayal.

[30] This story appears in Borges's *Ficciones* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), edited and translated by Anthony Kerrigan, pp. 151-157. I also discuss the Borges story, "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote," translated by Anthony Bonner, pp. 45-63.

Thus, Borges's story presents an image of Judas—holding his thirty pieces of silver as Christ is crucified—as representative of the true meaning of the Incarnation, of the divinity of God being lowered to the level of humanity. Something of this parodic play with a difference is at work in *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes*. For both Borges, and our anonymous *Lazarillo* author, the question of Christ's divinity is complicated by a reading of his characteristically "nonhuman" behavior. The question gets asked: If God did condescend to come into the human form, to allow his divine nature to be degraded, to be shrouded in the corruptible flesh of humanity, would he really choose to live as righteously as Christ had, or would he "live it up" as Lazarillo attempts to do? How far (really?) is the descent from perfect deity without fault or sin to perfect human without fault or sin? In the process of crafting his narrative, the *Lazarillo*'s anonymous author transforms our understanding and approach to this and other sacred content, and to our contemporary understanding of the conventions of the novel as a genre for study. Parody is the dominant mode throughout. Not just as a literary technique, but as the general operating mode of the text itself. The idea of the novel as a literary form and mode of composition is given its first example in the *Lazarillo*. Beyond its formal techniques and use of prose in an extended narrative, the novel (as set forth in the *Lazarillo* text) begins to codify an idea of the novel as a possible generic designation. The *Lazarillo*, thus, is characterized by an anxiety for and preoccupation with preceding texts and literary traditions. It is parodic in its mode of engagement with that content, with an understanding of critique as humorous play, while designating meaningful difference. Religious content is featured as sacred to this early novel, but only as sacred as social ideologies and cultural issues are to contemporary writers. Thus, the contemporary novel, like its progenitor the *Lazarillo*, is characterized by its parodic play on "architexts," including the most preeminent architext, which can be read as reality itself. Literature, as Gérard Genette declares, is

always already in the “second degree”—once removed by its engagement with prior texts and traditions, but perhaps also mimetically related to our lived-experience and consciousness of reality. As the novel’s earliest progenitor, the *Lazarillo* text established the codes of composition that continue to *play* a part in its construction.

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